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Direct-Current Recall in Madagascar

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[T]here is no exterior “truth” to be salvaged from the immediate world of commerce and everyday popular culture. […] Surfaces and appearances are the deceptive, seductive and mystifying manifestations of an underlying reality.

—Iain Chambers (1994:100)

Global economies do not control the meanings of the commodities that their profits turn upon, even if the appropriation of these goods in the form of gifts, commodities, or prestige valuables inevitably entangles receivers in wider relations that are not easily shrugged off.

—Nicholas Thomas (1991:123–24)

First Impressions

At the rain-soaked muddy taxi-brousse (bush taxi) station in Antananarivo, Madagascar’s capital, a young Malagasy man with a stringed instrument tucked under one arm calmly awaited his ride. He seemed unconcerned when droplets of rain began to settle on his unusual-looking instrument. The instrument’s wooden body had been delicately carved into the form of a portable radio-cassette player, detailed with carrying handle, fast forward, reverse, and play buttons, radio frequency and volume control knobs, frequency band display, condenser microphone, antenna, and speaker. Protruding horizontally from this keenly replicative, resonant chamber was the instrument’s neck and then peg head (with wooden friction peg holes hand-bored through). Four nylon strings, salvaged bits of discarded fishing line, stretched the length of the neck and bisected longitudinally the wooden image of a radio-cassette player. Frets on the neck were fashioned from lengths of fishing line attached snugly all the way around the neck. The body of the instrument was dirt-stained and worn away in those spots most frequently raked by the performer’s right hand. The sound-reproducing machine that this musical instrument replicated in Madagascar is commonly called a magnéto.

This portable technological device, the magnéto, must have been an ex-
tremely meaningful acoustical sign for this musician: Why would he go to such great lengths to detail just the physical image of this electronic device yet (apparently) none of its electronic/acoustic properties?1 And what a stirring image, resplendent with insinuations of aural empowerment! Radio transmissions in Madagascar often originate from the Malagasy Radio Nationale. Was this musician empowering himself iconically with the broadcast of his own playing over the national radio frequency, imagining himself into national musical recognition and appreciation? Did this instrument’s form publicly express an inherent desire to be compensated—at all, much less equitably—for his musical talents, as only so few Malagasy musicians are? Perhaps the instrument’s mimetic shape had been designed to convey criticism of the unlikelihood that this man’s own musical skills would ever be nationally recognized, or perhaps the (in)accessibility in Madagascar of actual radio-cassette players, which are often prohibitively expensive. And it also may have been a striking bifocal image of both the impermanence of things themselves in Madagascar and a human impermeability to the elements: no hard-shell felt-lined case for this instrument, not even a sack of some sort, and no rain protection for the instrument’s owner himself, who in the drizzle awaited his ride acquiescently.

In Madagascar, magnétops often rest unusable, for emitting sound, at least, as signs of dormant power—coldly retaining echoes of the National Radio Station or archiving memories of the sounds of a limited selection of pirate cassette tapes available for sale at the bazary be, the town’s outdoor market. Such tape recordings are often unreliable products, dubbed onto low frequency response and short-lived tapes with dual carriage portable cassette machines. These tapes resound temptingly from pirate tape dealers’ stalls at the market, enticing shoppers to possess their own copies. Yet cassette tapes blasting throughout the market often intone an implicit anxiousness among Malagasy, for the cost of these tapes usually prohibits ownership. Velomaro, a powerful healer and spirit medium in the east coast port town of Tamatave, remarked once while strolling through the market with me, “Iah, tiako ilay karazana mosika, fa lafo loatra izay, sy efa potika ilay magnéto aminahy” (Yeah, I like this sort of music, but it costs too much, and besides, my magnéto doesn’t work).

While cassette recordings available in Madagascar are often of foreign musicians such as Bryan Adams, Michael Bolton, or Ace of Base, they are also commonly of Malagasy popular musicians such as Mily Clément, Jaojoby, and Freddy de Mahajanga. These tapes resound with a desire to claim sounds of one’s own, to possess a copy of something Malagasy.2 For listeners in remote parts of the island, the (operable) magnéto is often the only medium for ever hearing these pop musicians who themselves commonly reside in the northern or central regions of the island. As a foreign-produced item that reproduces (and represents the reproduction of) the voices of Malagasy pop stars, the magnéto can possess a combinative aura, part foreign, part Malagasy.

In the (electricity-less) countryside, owning a radio-cassette magnéto is often even less conceivable. Here, powering the rare operable magnéto presents difficulties. When possible, for larger village ceremonies at which musicians are unavailable, an automobile battery might be hauled by hand to generate

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1. A view of Antananarivo, the crowded capital of Madagascar, September 1993. (Photo by Ron Emoff)
power for a magnéto. Otherwise, magnétos in the villages must run on unreliable, expensive, and difficult-to-obtain Chinese-made D-size batteries, which discharge their current much too quickly and unpredictably. While a portable radio-cassette can be a medium for the transmission and transformation of varied modes of power and desire, in practical terms the device most often operates unreliably in Madagascar, even with new batteries, which often surge and fail. The magnéto’s desirability has coevolved with the frustration of not being able to power it consistently for use as a sound-transmitting device.

The magnéto does not work among Malagasy in the villages or in town simply as a prestigious commodity sign. It often is a sign of musical (and other) inventiveness more than a functioning transmitter of distant radio broadcasts or pre(re)corded cassette tapes. When requesting that I take formal photographs of them, Malagasy people from various parts of the island commonly insisted on holding in plain view a magnéto, even if one borrowed solely for the photograph. On numerous occasions these photo props were electronically inoperable, battery-less phantoms without the capacity to reproduce sound. Of the varied yet limited possessions one could choose with which to be photographed, it is no coincidence that Malagasy people from different regions of the island consistently chose to be photographed—therefore remembered—with a foreign-made sound-producing device, one that works in varied ways even when it does not work to emit sound. When asked why she chose to be photographed with a magnéto, one young Malagasy woman on the east coast responded, “Satria manao maresaka izy” (Because it makes a lot of good sound). Others replied similarly, which at first baffled me because these were commonly magnétos that made no sound at all! “Good sound” was important because the radio-cassette, while a virtual image of often fallow foreign or distant powers, can yet act as medium for very immediate ancestral power among Malagasy. Such a mode of power most often relies upon sound production.

Magnétos stand in part for a capacity to amplify, transmit, capture, and transport varied modes of sound not just among the living, but to revered ancestral spirits. Indeed, in many ceremonies throughout Madagascar, spirits do not take corporeal form until they are coaxed, appeased, and invited with their preferred music, performed usually on French-introduced accordions or on valiha, a Malagasy stringed instrument found in varying forms throughout Madagascar. Valiha are strung with individual strands of unraveled bicycle brake cables, and their resonant chambers are sometimes made from thin roofing sheet metal, tôle. Malagasy commonly express a sentiment that colonially introduced materials such as brake cabling and tôle make ceremonially efficacious improvements in sound intensification and amplification over older versions of the valiha. Tombo Daniel, a well-known valiha player in Tamatave confirmed this, citing the improved maresaka as compared with older instruments, which were often built of bamboo. Maresaka is a performative aesthetic in Madagascar that involves sound density, texture, complexity, and volume, among other components. The accordion as well is appreciated for the maresaka it can generate.
A magnéto represents an inherent power enabling contact and communication with ancestral spirits through its capacity for vital complex sound (re)production. As an interpretable commodity sign, the magnéto can conceptually bespeak an entanglement between the foreign electronics production line and the Malagasy spirit realm.

Nicholas Thomas wrote, “Artifacts can be significant as markers of other people with whom one does not identify; they can signify difference, contest, and relatedness” (1991:26; emphasis added). In the photo-takes mentioned above, are Malagasy people simply displaying the European-made device for the European’s gaze, perhaps even as a sign of relatedness through possession? The magnéto clearly stands in some part as a symbolic construction of European power (110), yet not solely as this. In one historical flash, the Malagasy “subject” becomes recollectable by her or his possession of a device that conveys a relatedness-by-possession to the foreigner behind the camera (who almost always carries some combination of electronic devices). Yet the Malagasy people in the photos also announce a dissimilarity to other Malagasy, who most often do not possess a magnéto. They effectively create, then, a momentary space for themselves entre-deux, to be remembered as neither fully foreign nor quite Malagasy.

**Dislocation of the Wild Man Onstage**

The musician at the transport station in Antananarivo was Antandroy. The Antandroy are a group of Malagasy from the southern region of Madagascar, commonly thought to be nomadic-like wanderers who often travel throughout the island in search of viable cash income. In regions other than their southern homeland, Antandroy are often shunned for being aggressive, dangerous, and savage. Indeed, one non-Antandroy Malagasy man at the taxi-brousse station in Antananarivo had warned me in French, without any explanation, to beware of this Antandroy man and of Antandroy in general—a cryptic and unsettling admonition. Antandroy seem to recall among other Malagasy peoples, especially in larger towns, something they would often pre-
fer to forget: a premodern “primitive” past. Among other Malagasy, Antandroy are sometimes compared to South African Zulus, a people generally imagined in Madagascar as dressed in loincloths, carrying spears, dancing and interacting wildly: a savage Black Other. Antandroy do commonly carry silver-tipped hardwood (nanto) spears used in their southern homeland primarily for cattle herding, though also as a sign of Antandroy ancestral power, and Antandroy men sometimes dress ceremonially in loincloths. Antandroy dancing—vigorously, agile, unrestrained—is distinctive and well known throughout the island.
Antandroy thus are often avoided or met with apprehension and disdain in Madagascar, in part for embodying a “less civilized” past many others are content to dis-remember. Yet Antandroy are also implicitly admired for their tenacity in the face of adversity; for surviving drought and material impoverishment; for repelling French colonials with just their spears and sheer ferocity, and for withstanding numerous other hardships in their southern homeland. Antandroy are mediums for often uncomfortable, ambivalent recollections among other Malagasy.

Many non-Antandroy express the sentiment that Antandroy music itself is incomprehensible or distasteful because of its call for unusually complex improvisational acuity and its extremely rapid tempo, for instance. Sometimes such musical discomfort is connected to beliefs that Antandroy are virtually too powerful in spiritual matters; in Madagascar musical skill is commonly a primary facet of competence and efficacy in communicating with ancestral spirits. Antandroy are sometimes thought to be even too musical, or, more accurately, musical in ways that are not readily comprehensible or pleasant to many other Malagasy.

The Antandroy man at the taxi-brousse station was only one of numerous Antandroy musicians I encountered who had built such an instrument in the form of a magnèto. While Antandroy themselves can embody or evoke certain recollections among other Malagasy, the magnèto and the stringed instruments modeled after it, called mandôlina, in turn store, facilitate, and proliferate certain modes of remembering and recollecting among Antandroy, which I will address momentarily.

Antandroy ceremonial music as played on the mandôlina is virtually never broadcast over Madagascar’s Radio Nationale. Yet, renatured sound bits lifted from Antandroy musical performance are popular when segmented, filtered, and reined in through the recordings and performances of popular musicians who reside in or operate out of the capital, such as Rossy, Poopy, or Tarika. Images of Antandroy are sometimes used by these musicians to invoke a poetics of loss manifest in the particular hardships of Antandroy. In Tarika’s song “Haintany” (Drought) for instance, the narrator, who is implicitly Antandroy (though the singer herself is not), laments the extreme conditions in southern Antandroy territory through images of starving children and widespread sadness (Tarika 1994). The Antandroy lokanga (a three-stringed bowed instrument) and ndrimotra breath singing are also frequently copied and incorporated by Tarika and other pop stars. Yet it is not Antandroy themselves who are the musicians in these popular bands. Rather, the musicians are most often Merina actors who model Antandroy musical behavior. Merina are the predominant Malagasy group in the region around Antananarivo and historically have been a politically and economically privileged group throughout the island.

Tarika and Rossy’s bands commonly imitate unique Antandroy dance and dress. This includes (un)dressing in loincloths and carrying spears. In exclusive auditorium or stadium performance spaces, these musicians fragment and reconstitute Antandroy savageness into purified images, purged from the peril these musical signs, when produced by Antandroy themselves, stand for elsewhere in Madagascar. While other Malagasy musically encode and market sentimentality—drawing upon images of Antandroy poverty, suffering, and wildness—such expropriating processes can rebound negatively upon Antandroy, amplifying their suffering. For example, Velontsoa and Vinelo, two gifted Antandroy musicians, have expressed consternation over hearing sound bits of their own music broadcast over the radio, knowing that it is mostly Merina musicians from Antananarivo who profit from popular hits reliant upon Antandroy-like musical signs and principles. Velontsoa and Vinelo have
had to struggle to feed their families while their own extraordinary musical skills have gone unremunerated and underappreciated. Once, when I invited him to join me for a rare Rossy performance in Tamatave, Vinelo remarked after the performance, “Misaotra, fa raha manao mosika tandroy, tsy mahay mafy izy.” This was a complex evaluation by which Vinelo meant, in part, that Rossy’s group only thinly imitates Antandroy musics. Vinelo was not impressed by the copy.

**Colonial Desire and (Un)making Copies**

Signs of Antandroy-ness are exploited cautiously by non-Antandroy popular musicians in Madagascar. Rossy and Tarika usually perform only one tune
dressed up as or otherwise imitating Antandroy before returning to their regular musical style or attire. Antandroy visual and acoustic difference is performed as a novelty. It is the capacity to make copies from an original already fabled for its extraordinary power that makes this part of the performance effective. Such empowerment draws upon caricature and even erasure—the capacity to step into, and then quickly out of, Antandroy-ness. In other expressive practices throughout Madagascar, it is often the actual process of copying, rather than the thingness of the copy itself, that is most valued and empowering.\(^7\) Merina imitation of Antandroy musical principles is another instance of the silencing and erasure of Antandroy, for Antandroy are not present as participating musicians or audience members at these events. The magnéto also can signify absence and silence: of an aural electronic texture often immediately contained or altogether missing in everyday practice.\(^8\)

Merina musicians and their audiences become possessed by a colonial-like fascination with wildness as represented by images of Antandroy.\(^9\) Rossy and Hanitra Rasoanaivo (of Tarika) have both remarked upon the popularity of their Antandroy-like performance segments. Michael Taussig writes about the very “colonial trade in wildness that the history of the senses involves” (1993:44). He continues, “in times past the shamans warded off danger by means of images imitating that danger, and in this sense they used equivalence—mimesis—as an instrument” (45). By imitating and replicating Antandroy musical mannerisms in performance, Merina popular musicians, in a strange commercial conversion of power, ward off the musical and spiritual prowess of Antandroy.

Antandroy loss of control over their own creative signs, over the sounds that are so specifically meaningful to them in spiritual, collective, and personal ways, as well as the inaccessibility of any capital gain from their creative property, contributes to Merina commercial success. In the copying, Antandroy musical signs are stripped of their threatening tone; they become purified, well-mannered entertainment. By becoming the (image of) the wild man, non-Antandroy musicians and fans do not truly take in Antandroy power. On the contrary, they diffuse it in the copying. Merina here successfully seek out an “authenticity in the exotic”—an exotic that is not distant but rather located within their own national boundaries (Gell 1986:130).

It is no coincidence that in Madagascar the magnéto, a foreign-produced machine whose primary (initially intended) capacity is to make copies or to transmit them as radio waves, is an object that can mediate such important transformations and transferences of power. Among Antandroy the magnéto or its image (as a mandôlina) can assist in enacting a reconversion of Merina performative appropriations so that creative signs that were once Antandroy become theirs once again. Such reconversion is fashioned appropriately through the magnéto, itself a prominent sign of radio broadcasts under Merina control. The magnéto has the power to recycle, restate, and create multiledged discourses about appropriation, collaboration, and exploitation.

An analogy might be drawn here to innumerable occasions of exploitation in musical production in the U.S. During the early rock-and-roll era (early to mid-1950s), compositions of black rural artists were dressed up, re-texted, and re-performed by white musicians, receiving radio airplay only once covered by white performers.\(^10\) Pervading this era of musical production were white moralist condemnations of “savage” black music driven by sexually evocative rhythms and lyrics that possessed and infected white youth. Elvis Presley’s musical success was based largely on his copying the linguistic styles, performative gestures, mannerisms, and repertoires of “wilder” black musicians, such as those of Arthur “Big Boy” Crudup. Music marketers of this period used these moralist attacks to enhance the appeal of rock and roll among youth. Musical
blackness was not something merely to step into and then quickly out of. Rather, black musics were marketed as white products. (Again, Elvis’s mode of performance is a prominent example.) References back to the original black musicians or song styles were effectively erased. Antandroy “wildness” has similarly been naturalized by non-Antandroy performers and packaged for its market value. In Merina performances in Madagascar, it is the effectiveness of bringing up and then erasing the image of the wild Antandroy itself that is commercially and aesthetically salient. It is precisely this effacement, the evocation of the original and then its expunging that is foregrounded in Merina performance.

**Directed Spirit Current**

Sadness, dislocation, loss, and yet perseverance and the inevitable joy of being with family are prominent intersubjective components of the Antandroy experience. Sound bits of Antandroy musical practices can evoke images of suffering, disconnection from the ancestral homeland, and survival experiences that arouse anguished recollections even among Malagasy who are not Antandroy. The magnéto is often multiply desirable among Antandroy. When it works, the magnéto is an empowering device good to have and use (or to sign with) even within limitations imposed by cheaply made tapes and batteries. The radio-cassette is also (an often silent) sign of the joyous sound commotion that literally unites families and beloved ancestral spirits. Simultaneously, the magnéto can evoke an acoustic recall among Antandroy of their own individual musical virtuosity that has long gone uncompensated and unrecognized—another level of sadness, loss, disempowerment, and dislocation.

Velontsoa, a devout spiritualist as well as musician, creatively combined varied sources of power into a particular aoly, a curative amulet he made. From the sticky herbal center packed into a cow’s horn protruded a broken-off segment of a portable radio antenna, a sign of the technologized transmission of modulated waveforms and their transference into audible sound. As a component of this aoly, the silvery radio antenna stood as a medium of empowerment in its capacity to combine varied forces. While the radio antenna mimed the transmission and amplification of sound through radio broadcast, with it Velontsoa also recollected his own ancestral connection to a lineage called Zafimbolafotsy, the grandchildren of silver. Velontsoa told me that silver (volafotsy, or white gold) also represents to him and other Antandroy the power of colonial capital, as silver coins, when available, are sometimes nailed into the doorways of Antandroy ceremonial houses. In essence, healing here drew upon combining ancestral, colonial, electronic, acoustical, and herbal powers. Only through combining two modes of value, the material and the spiritual, could Velontsoa fully express Antandroy traditional values (Davenport 1986:108).

Velontsoa’s aoly, with its protruding radio antenna, took on the power of the sound-transmitting device it copied, a machine most Antandroy cannot afford. As with the Antandroy mandolina detailed with the markings and form of a portable radio-cassette player, Velontsoa empowered this aoly iconically with the propagation of electronically produced and mediated sound waves over the national radio station. Recall that the Radio Nationale emanating from the capital Antananarivo is controlled by Merina, and that Antandroy ceremonial musics are virtually never broadcast over it. The antenna as part of a spiritual object represented the empowered possession of a prohibitively expensive musical device, as well as the prestige implicit in Velontsoa’s imagined control of his own music symbolically sounding over the national radio sta-
tion. Velontsoa also evoked an amalgamated power reliant upon a reciprocal transmitting capacity emergent through this aoly. Sound traveled to the razana, the collective of ancestral spirits, through the antenna while ancestral and foreign healing powers were simultaneously transmitted through this same device into the present.

Often left behind in an age of musical mechanical reproduction, some Antandroy musicians amplify the curative power they create by modeling their instruments and healing devices after an acoustically powerful yet difficult to obtain electronic device. The magnéto radio-cassette player (or images of it) gives Antandroy some room to maneuver, to imagine a capacity to disseminate and profit nationally from their own music. They accomplish imaginatively what they cannot enjoy materially. Obtaining the machine itself can represent a way of capturing and recycling some of the (copied) musical power rightfully due them. Indeed many Antandroy persistently express a strong desire to purchase a magnéto. The Antandroy musicians who construct their mandólina to replicate in form this sound-producing machine reappropriate, symbolically, musical ideals over which they have a just claim.

Abundance of Meaning

In Madagascar, a place in which material possessions are sparse, things take on, or more precisely are frequently given, a life of their own. Material things often are not taken at face value but rather are judged for their capacity to be recycled, reused, and reevaluated. This is apparent for example in everyday practice when Chicago Bulls T-shirts are worn by some Malagasy, not as signs of an American sports empire, but as an embodiable display of the significance of and reverence for zébu cattle, which occupy a connective space between Malagasy and their ancestral spirits.

It is not the operational magnéto itself that communicates to, with, and about ancestral spirits in tromba spirit possession. On a few occasions, the musician performing a ceremony would be hours late. In the meantime, trombaistes might try to play prerecorded music to appease, coax, and entice revered ancestral tromba spirits into the present. Such efforts are always to no avail. The spirits appear only once the proper live musical performance begins. The sound a magnéto can produce, the machine’s capacity to play at high volume, its prestige as a foreign thing are all inefficacious in tromba ceremony. Indeed, the magnéto-copy mandólina, once a silent template of wood then endowed with a doubled sound-producing iconicity—its mimetic form and its actual capacity to produce sound—can communicate with ancestral spirits in Antandroy spiritual ceremonies. In this capacity, there is a taking back where the Antandroy instrument builder/musician endows the image of a potentially powerful yet most often silent foreign electronic device with Malagasy spirit power. The magnéto is not a broken-down relic of foreign productivity; it has been transformed into a medium of Malagasy spirit power.

Conclusion

It is clear that one of the key struggles of modern life is to retain both a sense of authentic locality, often as narrow as the private sphere, and yet also lay claim to a cosmopolitanism that at some level may evoke rights to global status. (Miller 1998:19)

Many Malagasy in rural areas imagine much of the outside world unspecifically as ampitany, “out there,” and not as specific locales of desire. A sense of
cosmopolitanism or global status does not necessarily link Malagasy directly to goings-on in the metropolis (Paris for example). Rather, perceptions of the global are more likely to be influenced by what occurs in Antananarivo. Antandroy do not value the magnéto or its image simply for its potential exchange value, nor for its capacity to signal economic aspiration or material ownership. As a machine intended to reproduce and transmit sound, the magnéto becomes immediately more than an imported commodity in Madagascar. Its value among Antandroy can only be fully absorbed within the scheme of Malagasy ancestral reverence, and the vital role that sound production plays in spiritual practices. In daily life, Antandroy often experience much inequity. Through the abundance of meaning that things themselves store, Antandroy cross an often-turbulent path impeded in part by appropriations of their cultural property. Taking charge of the copied image of the magnéto, Antandroy create a new mode of power, one unleashed in the very artisanry and conjuring of copy-making itself. When asked about the reasons for constructing a magnéto-copy mandolîna, Antandroy musicians consistently and tersely answer, “Satria tsara feo ilay magnéto” (Because the magnéto has a good voice).

Magnétos do not mask colonial voices or recollections to amplify ancestral ones. Malagasy do not by-pass memories of the colonial era to simply reach back further into worlds of precolonial ancestral and social significance. Through the magnéto Malagasy can incorporate foreign powers, or representatives of these, to construct a combinative ancestral power that can effect (or imagine) significant alterations in and upon the present. Through foreign-produced things such as the magnéto, Malagasy can merge what is perceived to be the global into local ways of making sense.
Notes

1. I was not able to speak with this particular man, for this event occurred very early in my research before I could speak the Malagasy language well (the man with the musical instrument indicated to me that he spoke no French). This whole scenario at the taxi-brousse station lasted only a few minutes before the man’s taxi arrived.

2. Yet inherent in such a desire is an actuality of foreign mediation since these recordings are duplicated onto Chinese-made tapes. I have discussed problems of applying performative schema such as “popular” and “traditional” in Madagascar elsewhere (Emoff 2002a).

3. Tombo Daniel can be heard performing on Globe Style Records (Daniel 1986).

4. French colonial infiltration into Antandroy territory in the south of Madagascar was indeed limited. For more historical and cultural detail of the French presence, or the scarcity of it, see Emoff (2002a).

5. The mandolina bears little or no connection to the European mandolin except perhaps in general body size.

6. The lokanga was likely adopted by Antandroy from Bara, their southern neighbors in Madagascar.

7. See Emoff (2002a; 2002b) specifically on musical empowerment and tromba spirit possession ceremony.

8. Jo Tacchi (1998) has written on operable radios as a “texture” that creates distinct spaces between self and other.


10. For example, “That’s All Right Mama” was originally recorded in 1941 by Mississippi bluesman Big Boy Crudup, but was not a national hit until Elvis Presley’s 1954 cover of it.

11. At least in terms of copyright benefits, entitlement, and much of any other credit to black musicians. Iain Chambers observes:

   The complex interchange between the subordinated traces of black Africa and the institutions of white America (its work discipline, the Church, organized entertainment) and, via these, European musics, created the volatile matrix of Afro-American sonorities. Throughout this encounter a persistent tension has been maintained, first by slavery then racism and social marginalization, preserving much of the autonomous sense of black American music: “soul is survival” as James Brown rightly reminds us. It was out of this history, out of the blues and gospel, and their subsequent meshings in jazz, R & B and soul music, that a diverse musical syntax, quite distinct from European-derived “popular song,” developed. (1985:10)

12. Malagasy who wore such emblematic T-shirts professed no knowledge of the NBA.

References

Chambers, Iain

Daniel, Tombo

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